

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Well-Being Committee met in special session on Tuesday, May 28, 2019 at 3:30 PM in the Art Room at Strong Middle School, Durham, Connecticut. Committee members present: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Moore
Student Advisors present: Conner Byrne
Teacher Advisor present: Mrs. Schaefer
Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools
Committee members absent: Mr. DeFilio and Molly Yale

Mrs. Caramanello called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Bob Moore made a motion, seconded by Victor Friedrich, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda as amended: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Moore. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes - March 19, 2019 and April 23, 2019

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of March 19, 2019 and April 23, 2019.

In favor of approving the minutes of March 19, 2019 and April 23, 2019 as presented: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich and Mr. Moore. Motion carried, with Mr. Hicks abstaining for both and Dr. Friedrich for one meeting.

Working Definition

Mrs. Caramanello explained that Mr. DeFilio had sent a draft definition. Mrs. Caramanello would prefer to use the definition that the district already uses.

Dr. Veronesi explained that well-being is defined as the personal state of being safe, healthy and happy. When the school team started to focus on it, they used Martin Seligman's research. Seligman is a leader in the field and has defined happiness and well-being as a construct with different elements. He uses the acronym PERMA which means positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and achievement. Dr. Veronesi felt that the definition of the personal state of being safe, healthy and happy would be a good place to start.

Mrs. Caramanello felt that they needed to steer away from including too much in the definition. Dr. Friedrich agrees that the definition should be short. Mr. Moore explained that the committee had

struggled because there was no definition. Everyone generally agreed with the definition suggested by Dr. Veronesi. Dr. Friedrich explained that PERMA would be the means, not the strategy.

Dr. Veronesi added that mission statements have not been identified for committees other than Utilization. She took that mission statement and revised it as a possible starting point, "The mission of the Well-Being Committee is to maximize the use of resources and supports to meet the identified well-being priorities as determined by the administration." She defined administration to include the staff and staff well-being committee as well. Dr. Friedrich felt that the board should be included in there as well.

Dr. Veronesi explained that the strategic coherence plan was written and then feedback was received from teachers and principals. She believes that once improvement strategies are identified, this committee should determine how they can help. She hoped that the committee would come with ideas as well. One example would be that the committee could look at strengths and weaknesses that come out of the climate survey in the fall.

Dr. Friedrich felt that the legitimacy of the strategic plan comes from the fact that it was presented to the board and it was adopted. He felt that the well-being priorities should be under the advice of or with the consent of the board as this is a subcommittee of the board. Dr. Veronesi suggested the wording of identified priorities as indicated in the strategic coherence plan and Dr. Friedrich agreed.

Mrs. Caramanello suggested adding administration, staff and students and Mr. Hicks felt that could be condensed into Region 13 community. Dr. Veronesi agreed that the strategic coherence plan is steered by all of those people. Mr. Hicks asked how this will all actually be accomplished and Dr. Friedrich felt that that wouldn't be included in the mission statement. Mr. Hicks disagreed and mentioned that Howard Fetterman had always said that the mission statement should include how it will be accomplished.

Dr. Veronesi gave an example that students really want to be outside and the strategic coherence plan might say that all students are able to be outside for a break at least once a week and this committee might say they want to make sure outdoor learning furniture is supported in the budget. Dr. Friedrich thought that maybe the committee doesn't write their mission statement until there is a tactical plan.

Mr. Moore stated that the committee needs to gather what's going on and what's missing. Dr. Friedrich summarized that that would be identifying needs and maximizing the use of resources. Dr. Veronesi added that this committee would not identify the needs. Dr. Friedrich commented that, if that is the case, he didn't know why they were meeting and Dr. Veronesi felt it was the same as the Student Achievement Committee who doesn't actually test the students. Different examples were discussed. Mr. Hicks stated that ACES had just done a survey and developed over 1,000 items. Mrs. Schaefer felt that it was important to ask the students what would make school fun. Dr. Veronesi also mentioned the homework policy.

Mrs. Schaefer felt that the teacher well-being champions could help to trickle this into the district. She noted that the principal at Strong senses it already and is helping to spread it even more. Dr. Veronesi felt that Strong School has done deliberate, goal-oriented steps related to well-being.

Mr. Moore felt that equity needs to fit into the happiness piece and Mrs. Caramanello explained that agenda item 10 (Well-Being Status) would be a regular item on the committee's agendas. Mr. Moore felt that equity needs to be included in the mission statement somehow.

Well-Being Activity

Dr. Veronesi explained that she, Mr. Moore and Mrs. Caramanello thought that the Well-Being Committee should do something during the meeting to enhance well-being. Mrs. Schaefer had the committee members work on pots that she will plant pansies in and a card will be attached that says, "Wishing all a wonderful summer full of sunshine and happiness from the Board of Education's Well-Being Committee." Dr. Friedrich stated that while this may increase a teacher's well-being, it is making him extremely anxious.

Charge/Scope of Committee

Mrs. Caramanello felt that this issue has been covered.

Climate Surveys

Dr. Veronesi explained that the climate surveys go out in the fall, but she wondered if the committee felt that a safety survey should be administered to the students. Mr. Moore had mentioned the Durham Manufacturing incident and that the students were unclear about what happened. She thought it would be beneficial to talk to kids at the middle school and high school about these issues and what would help them feel better. Conner Byrne explained that he felt that he never really knows what's going on and finds out after through the grapevine. He felt he would be less anxious if he knew what was happening.

Mr. Moore felt that the students should not know ahead of time if it's a drill, but should know as soon as they are in lockdown. Dr. Veronesi does feel that safety and security fall under the Well-Being Committee and suggested doing a mini-survey with the middle and high school students. Dr. Veronesi will have a survey drafted and bring it back to the committee.

Dr. Veronesi asked Conner Byrne what the students would want to know about the different drills and he felt that they would want to know ahead of time that a drill would be happening. Mrs. Schaefer explained that some students at Strong and their parents are notified beforehand. Dr. Veronesi wondered if students would take it seriously if they knew it was a drill. Conner felt that there will always be someone, but most students would take it seriously.

Mrs. Caramanello summarized that a short safety survey would go out to the students before the end of this school year.

Senior Work Day

Dr. Veronesi explained that a group of senior girls had requested a meeting with Laura Francis, Ed Bailey and Dr. Veronesi to talk about having a Senior Service Day where the entire senior class would go into the communities and work in teams to address any projects. The students worked on the nature trail at Brewster, painting some of the buildings at Peckham Park, mulching, painting the lifeguard chairs at Lake Beseck and painting fences at the dog park. The Middlefield Rec Department provided doughnuts in the morning and there was pizza, fruit, water and cookies in the afternoon. Dr. Veronesi felt it was a fantastic day and another example of school and community partnerships.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that the students who worked at Brewster also went in to visit their teachers. She also stated that the graduating students in Plainville go back to the elementary schools and walk through the hallways in their caps and gowns.

Well-Being Status Check (Students/Staff)

Mrs. Caramanello asked if everyone agreed with having this item on the agenda each month and Dr. Veronesi felt maybe this should be more of a progress report toward improvement strategies.

Mrs. Schaefer noted that the last school-based Well-Being committee meeting is next Tuesday and Mrs. Caramanello stated that she will attend. Dr. Veronesi would be curious to know what the committee would recommend as three strategies or three resources based on what they have done. Mrs. Schaefer stated that the idea of self-leadership and the “flipping your lid” concept were the key things she learned this year. She explained the “flip your lid” concept for the committee and the idea is to pause before you flip. The key is the power of the pause. Mrs. Schaefer stated that she has had the best year for classroom management that she has ever had.

Mr. Hicks asked if students know how to do this and Mrs. Schaefer stated that they do and gave an example. Dr. Veronesi explained that she started out wanting to have an impact on the well-being of students and didn’t realize that adults needed it just as much. She also noted that there are higher and higher percentages of anxiety and depression in young children.

Dr. Veronesi stated that she is proud of the district for being unique and that this is a teacher-driven initiative. Mrs. Schaefer felt that every kid should know their teacher cares about them.

Committee Member Project(s)

Dr. Veronesi stated that Mr. DeFilio was passionate about his belief about what the work of the committee should be and they thought that it would be a good idea to give him a special assignment. Mr. DiFilio agreed to work with Dr. Veronesi on a protocol or checklist that would ensure that staff members, parents and other organizations pay attention to the needs of all students and do not inadvertently impact students and their feelings and experiences.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Moore. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
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